18th Gender Is My Agenda Campaign (GIMAC) Pre-Summit Consultation

“Accelerating Youth Empowerment for Sustainable Development”

High level panel on Climate Change

During the high level panel on climate change held during the 18th Gender is My Agenda Campaign (GIMAC) Pre-Summit meeting in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea in June 2011, the Mary Robinson Foundation - Climate Justice (MRFCJ) reaffirmed its commitment to contribute to the activities of the Troika on gender formed by South Africa, Mexico and Denmark in the lead up to COP 17/ CMP 7 in Durban, South Africa scheduled for 28 November 2011 to 9 December 2011.

The remarks sent by H.E. Mary Robinson added to the rich discussion of the panel whose participants included Honorable Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, Minister of International Relations and Cooperation of South Africa, Honorable Jean Paul Adam, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Seychelles, Honorable Edna Molewa, Minister of Water and Environmental Affairs of South Africa and Honorable Leonor Bula Epam Biribé, Vice-Minister of Social Affairs and Promotion of Women of Equatorial Guinea. The panel was chaired by Ms. Bineta Diop, Executive Director of Femmes Africa Solidarite.

H.E. Robinson highlighted the importance of employing key strategies to ensure effective mainstreaming of gender in all aspects of climate change discussions and stated that side events on gender and climate change will be held in September in New York during the United Nations General Assembly and in Durban during COP 17.
During the panel discussion, the ministers shared some experiences from their respective countries and all recognized the fact that women were particularly affected by the impact of climate change. Consequently, they committed themselves to ensure that the voices of African women be heard and taken into account at COP17. They also introduced the Network of African Women Ministers and Leaders for the Environment, launched in August 2010, as a valuable partner in Durban.

The panelists interacted with the audience, answering questions and welcoming suggestions on how to address climate change issues. The panelists then came up with key recommendations, some of which were:

- To involve the youth in discussions that concern them and their future by fostering intergenerational discussions;
- To design a mechanism to facilitate the input of GIMAC participants in the discussions in Durban;
- To discuss the cross-cutting and critical issues of climate change, youth, and gender at the same time;
- To look at climate change matters as developmental issues of our nations and people, especially women;
- To support the mobilization of women at grassroots level through awareness campaigns and to simplify the language of the United National Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to enable a better understanding of climate change issues.

Finally, as a way forward, a continental meeting on gender and climate change that will bring together women organizations from all over the continent is scheduled on 22-23 October 2011 in preparation for COP 17. Also, the South Africa delegation informed GIMAC participants that they had proposed to the UNFCCC Secretariat that an international meeting of women from all constituencies all over the world be held a day before the start of COP 17 to amplify women’s voices in the climate change debate. The GIMAC committed to engage in research and case studies to collect useful data aimed at supporting gender mainstreaming in climate change discussions.
The African Gender Award Ceremony, a biennial gathering, honors African leaders who have demonstrated outstanding achievements in implementing the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (SDGEA) and in furthering gender mainstreaming. Additionally, the Award recognizes a member of the Private Sector that promotes gender equality in the economic spheres and a Civil Society Organization for its commitment in mainstreaming the gender agenda.

On January 23rd 2011, on the margins of the 17th African Union Pre-Summit, the Selection Committee of the African Gender Award, chaired by Ms. Gertrude Mongella, former President of the Pan African Parliament, elected Her Excellency President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of the Republic of Liberia to receive the 2011 African Gender Award.

This year's African Gender Award Ceremony took place during the International Conference gala dinner, hosted by H.E President Wade of Senegal, on June 17th 2011 at Le Méridien Président in Dakar, Senegal. The Award was presented to H.E President Johnson Sirleaf by President Wade and witnessed by 500 high level dignitaries such as Hon. Gertrude Mongella, former President Pan African Parliament, Hon. Awa Ndiaye, Minister of Culture and Gender of Senegal, Hon. Vabah Gayflor, Minister of Gender and Development of Liberia, Hon. Annette Kiawu, Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Gender and Development in Liberia, Ambassadors, representatives of UN Women, African women networks, members of the private sector and participants of the International Conference.

Following an impassioned speech by Hon. Gertrude Mongella, the Recognitions were presented to P.A Rib’s House and Paramount International Young Women Initiative for the Private Sector and Civil Society Recognitions, respectively. Thereafter, H.E President Johnson Sirleaf was welcomed to the distinguished circle of African Gender Award laureates. President Wade commended President Johnson Sirleaf for her commitment to Africa’s development, for achieving peace and stability in Liberia, and especially for the accomplishments made in a country that was for years mired in civil war. President Wade continued on by reiterating his commitment to gender and to Senegalese women, who continue to accompany him in his quest for gender equality: “I am pleased to recall the major role that women play in society and at all levels, to consider the urgent need to strengthen our political will in favor of gender. I perfectly agree with the concept of "Gender Revolution" which I strive to translate into action... This is why in front of this Assembly and in accordance with my vision, I pledge solemnly to bring the request of Women in front of my counterparts in the AU and ECOWAS, to whom I had already proposed the parity in our workspace.”

The gala dinner included musical performances by the famed Miatta Fahnbullen of Liberia and Senegalese artist, Alioune Mbaye Nder who got the guests off their chairs and up on their feet dancing. The guests also had the pleasure to watch a movie on FAS and the African Gender Award and a short documentary on Liberia’s post-conflict reconstruction.

Previous recipients of the African Gender Award include President Wade, President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa, President Paul Kagame of Rwanda and President Armando Guebuza of Mozambique.
Ms. Bineta Diop, the Founder and Executive Director of Femmes Africa Solidarité (FAS), has been invited by the Liberian Government to celebrate the recognition of H.E. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf as the winner of the 2011 African Gender Award, which was awarded to her in Dakar, Senegal in June 2011. The festivities, which are organized by the Liberian Government, will celebrate the African Gender Award at the Monrovia City Hall, Theatre Sinkor, Liberia on Friday, September 9, 2011 along with other distinctions and awards received by President Johnson Sirleaf.

The Liberian Government and Liberian women’s organisations are celebrating H.E. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, the President of the Republic of Liberia in observance of the African Women’s Day of Peace and for the Presentation and Unveiling of Prestigious Awards that the President has received in recent years from several organisations and international institutions around the world.

“After serving in many international organisations and advisory boards such as the International Crisis Group (USA) and Women Waging Peace (USA), President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf received numerous prestigious awards (…).Liberia is proud to have Ellen Johnson Sirleaf as President” said Honorable Vabah K. Gayflor, Minister of Gender and Development.

Some of the distinctions and awards include the African Gender Award given by the PanAfrican Centre for Gender, Peace and Development (PAC) of FAS, in June 2011; the 2010 Friend of the Media Award from the African Editors’ Union; the FAO CERES Medal (2008); the Crisis Group Fred Cuny Award for the Prevention of Deadly Crisis (2008); the Presidential Medal of Freedom (2007), the highest civilian honor bestowed by an American president.

Ms. Bineta Diop, referring to the Liberian President as the most recent recipient of the African Gender Award said “A “gender revolution” has been triggered and international recognition of this is essential. This was the case a few months ago during the African Gender Forum and Award (AGFA) when we all convened, under the auspices of the Government of Senegal, to present the African Gender Award to one of our most active personalities and the first female president of the African continent who strives for the gender agenda, H.E. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf.”

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf is the 24th President of Liberia. Under her leadership, the national budget of Liberia has grown from $80 million in 2006 to more than $350 million in 2010. More than $5 million of private resources from international contributions were attracted to rebuild vital infrastructure

⇒ to build schools and clinics and markets and to foster scholarships.
⇒ Liberian Ministry of Gender and Development Statistics.
FAS delegates have conducted a mission to Burundi early in August 2011 within the scope of the project “Building Democratic Institutions through Gender Equality in Burundi”. The project, funded by the United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF), aims at engendering the democratic process in Burundi to ensure the full and equitable participation of women in all decision-making processes and the protection of women’s rights. It consists in the capacity-building of political leaders in gender-sensitive policies and the establishment of a platform for advocacy on the adoption and implementation of laws and policies that promote gender equality.

The mission was conducted from 1st to 5 August 2011 to finalize the implementation framework of the project with FAS’ local partners and to officially present the project to all stakeholders in Burundi. At this occasion, the Steering Committee, which is composed of actors from the civil society as well as representatives of key ministries and parliamentarians and is the body in charge of implementing the project locally, successfully conducted its first meeting.

A ceremony was held on 4 August 2011 in Bujumbura to present the project before an audience of parliamentarians, government representatives and members of the civil society and the media. The ceremony was chaired by Ms. Marie Louise Baricako, Chair of the Executive Board of FAS, and Ms. Laetitia Twagirimana, Director General for the advancement of women and gender equality, representing the Minister for National Solidarity, Human Rights and Gender of Burundi. At this occasion, Ms. Baricako explained in her speech to the stakeholders that “the project aims at strengthening the capacities of women leaders, women that are today in political decision-making positions and women of the civil society and the media, so that they can fully participate and play their part in responding to the needs and priorities of women.”

FAS is a long-standing partner of Burundi, notably through the project it has been conducting since 2007 for the adoption and implementation of National and Regional Action Plans on implementing Resolution 1325 in Burundi, Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).
During the 17th Session of the Human Rights Council (HRC) in June 2011, Femmes Africa Solidarite brought four Ivorian women to Geneva, Switzerland as part of an ongoing advocacy effort to promote the participation of Ivorian women in the peace process in Côte d'Ivoire. The delegation of Ivorian women came from a broad representation of civil society and included Ms. Ténin Toure Diabate, President of the Network of Women Leading Muslim Women in Africa, Section of Côte d'Ivoire (REFELMA-CI), Ms. Viviane Sombo, President of the Association of Women Lawyers of Côte d'Ivoire (AFJCI), Ms. Namizata Sangare, President of the Organization of Women Active in Côte d'Ivoire (OFACI), and Ms. Alice Zadi, Representative of Mano River Women's Peace Network (MARWOPNET - Côte d'Ivoire).

At the 16th Session of the Human Rights Council, FAS facilitated the participation of Ivorian women who read a statement to the Council requesting the formation of an independent commission of inquiry to investigate reports of violence against civilians, particularly women, in Côte d'Ivoire. In March 2011 the HRC passed a resolution to establish an independent commission of inquiry. The first report of the commission was released during the 17th Session of the HRC. During the session, the Ivorian delegation made a statement to the Council calling for the representation of women in the Dialogue, Truth and Reconciliation Commission and for inclusion of women in the peace process. They also met with the representatives of several embassies and a member of the independent commission of inquiry, Ms Alapini Reine Gansou, to discuss the impact of the political insecurity in Côte d'Ivoire on women and to reiterate their demands that women be fully involved in the economic and political development of the country.

At a panel session held at the Palais des Nations in Geneva and chaired by Ms. Nyaradzai Gumbonzvanda, General Secretary of the World YWCA, the Ivorian delegation discussed the activities of their organizations in advancing peace efforts. They shared their conviction that Ivorians could work together to sustain peace in the country and highlighted the importance of fully implementing the recommendations of the independent commission of inquiry to prevent a return to conflict. The members of the Dialogue, Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which has at woyear mandate, were appointed in September 2011 and four of the eleven members of the Commission are women.

SAVE THE DATE

The 56th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) will be held on 27 February 2012 to 7 March 2011 in New York under the theme, “The empowerment of rural women and their role in poverty and hunger eradication, development and current challenges.”
Presentation of the Women-Led Businesses programme (WLB)
Check out our video presenting the general impact of the WLB program on its participants, and more in-depth information about three specific participants.

Check out our new Women-led Businesses Website and Facebook page!

⇒ The WLB Website:

In order to increase the visibility of the WLB Programme, a website was launched in February 2011 and includes the different activities since the first phase of the Programme, informative tools for other networks and women entrepreneurs, as well as a forum to permit user-friendly connection between participants.

⇒ The WLB Facebook Page and Group

While finalizing the creation of the WLB website, a Facebook group and a Facebook Page were set-up to link the WLB participants with mentors, IE professors and tutors, as well as FAS staff in order to facilitate the exchange of ideas, advices, and information. The WLB page can be found via and do not forget to LIKE it !!!

Publications:

In terms of best practices sharing, the WLB programme has developed various advocacy and partnership activities to ensure knowledge sharing, visibility and supporters. Thus the women beneficiaries and FAS participated in several regional and international forums. We are currently developing a manual to highlight good practices, achievements and impact of the WLB Programme as learning and sharing experience in Africa.
Africa has lost today one of its greatest daughters. Wangari was the champion of the environmental cause, to which she brought the attention of the Continent when nobody was talking about this great challenge. She worked tirelessly for the rural women, demanding African leaders to address climate change. She was a Human Rights defender who risked her life for ordinary people.

As African women, we have been proud of her recognition with the Nobel Peace Prize. We have also supported her leadership as President of the Economic, Social and Cultural Council of the African Union.

We are sure that the young women and men she mentored are ready to continue her fight for climate justice. However, her leadership, guidance and commitment will be missed. She was a visionary and has been an inspiration for all of us, and will continue to be for generations to come.


The African Union Peace and Security Department in partnership with Femmes Africa Solidarite (FAS) and the International Peace Institute (IPI) is convening a two-day Expert Group Meeting for finalizing a Panel of the Wise Report on Mitigating Vulnerabilities of Women and Children in Armed Conflicts. This meeting will seek to get final inputs from selected expert participants in order to finalize the report.

With the launch of the “2010: Year of Peace and Security in Africa”, through the Tripoli Declaration on the Elimination of Conflicts in Africa and the Promotion of Sustainable Peace, and the proclamation of 2010-2020 as the African Women’s Decade, Africa has seen a rise in high level commitments to ensuring the protection and participation of women in peace and security issues.

The Panel of the Wise of the African Union initiated a thematic reflection on “Women and Children in Armed Conflicts” during its seventh Meeting held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in November 2009. Through this initiative, the Panel reaffirmed its own commitment, and that of the AU as a whole, to contribute to alleviating the plight of women and children in armed conflict in Africa.

The Department of the international Relations of South Africa is convening a Consultative Continental Dialogue on the Impact of Climate Change on Women – Preparing for Durban and Beyond. The meeting is planned to be held in Pretoria,

Women from all regions of Africa through the Gender Is My Agenda (GIMAC) network coordinated by Femmes Africa Solidarite (FAS), Pan African Women’s Movement, AU Gender Directorate and SADC Gender Directorate will participate at the meeting 2011 to discuss how to address the challenges of women and climate change. The historic context of South Africa hosting the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is an opportunity for African women to gather, exchange views and inform the world of the consequences of climate change on their sisters in the rural areas of the continent. Grassroots women from urban and rural areas will be consulted in dialogue sessions that to craft a position that will influence the outcome of COP 17, on the impact that Climate Change has on them. The meeting aims to consolidate African declaration on women and climate change for Durban and Beyond.